

NCA  
VOC FOR PGM/FN  
BACKGROUNDER 5-6348  
HARRY DEBELIUS/BARCELONA

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## CATALONIAN AUTONOMY

ANNCR:

THE WESTERN SPANISH REGION OF CATALONIA MAY BE THE FIRST TO BE FORMALLY GRANTED A DEGREE OF AUTONOMY UNDER THE NEW SPANISH CONSTITUTION. HARRY DEBELIUS SENT THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM BARCELONA.

VOICE:

OF SPAIN'S THIRTEEN REGIONS, ONLY TWO ARE REALLY ON THE VERGE OF WINNING HOME RULE UNDER THE TERMS OF THE CONSTITUTION. OTHERS WILL TAKE LONGER. ONE OF THE TWO IS THIS BUSY REGION OF CATALONIA ON THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST.

HERE IN BARCELONA, CAPITAL OF THE REGION, I SPOKE WITH PRESIDENT JOSEP TARADELLAS OF THE GENERALITAT, AS THE FINAL DRAFT OF THE REGIONAL STATUTE WAS BEING DRAWN UP IN LATE DECEMBER. THE GENERALITAT IS THE OFFICIAL DESIGNATION OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OF CATALONIA, A REGIONAL GOVERNMENT WHICH DID NOT EXIST UNDER GENERAL FRANCO. IT HAS BEEN RESTORED ON A PROVISIONAL BASIS PENDING CONSTITUTIONAL APPROVAL OF WHAT THE CATALONIANS CALL THEIR ESTATUT, THEIR STATUTE OR REGIONAL CONSTITUTION.

THE OTHER REGION CLOSE TO WINNING CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION IS THE BASQUE COUNTRY, BUT THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS THERE WHICH MAY DELAY THE PROCESS OF FORMAL RECOGNITION OF THE BASQUE HOMERULE GOVERNMENT.

HERE IN BARCELONA, POLITICIANS ARE WAITING FOR THE WORD IN ORDER TO SET INTO MOTION THE MACHINERY WHICH WILL GUARANTEE

THEM THEIR TRADITIONAL SEMI-INDEPENDENCE FROM THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IN MADRID. THAT LEGISLATIVE MACHINERY MAY BE CRANKED UP EVEN BEFORE THE END OF NINETEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT.

(OPT) FOLLOWING THE CEREMONY OF ROYAL APPROVAL IN MADRID ON DECEMBER TWENTY-SEVENTY, AND THE FORMAL PROMULGATION OF THE NEW SPANISH CONSTITUTION, THE NEXT STEP IN THE DIRECTION OF CATALONIAN HOMERULE WILL BE APPROVAL OF THE REGIONAL STATUTE BY THE CATALONIAN MEMBERS OF THE SPANISH PARLIAMENT. THEY THEMSELVES HAVE ALREADY GIVEN THEIR UNOFFICIAL APPROVAL TO THE TEXT. ALL THAT IS REQUIRED NOW IS FOR THEM TO MEET OFFICIALLY TO VOTE ON THE STATUTE FOLLOWING THE PROMULGATION OF THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION. ONCE THEY SAY YES TO THE DOCUMENT, IT HAS TO BE APPROVED BY THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE CONGRESS OF DEPUTIES IN MADRID, THE LOWER HOUSE OF THE SPANISH PARLIAMENT. BUT THAT, TOO, IS EASY. CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS ALREADY HAVE COPIES OF THE STATUTE AND NO MAJOR OBJECTIONS ARE FORESEEN. THE NEXT TO LAST STEP IS A REFERENDUM AMONG THE PEOPLE OF CATALONIA, BUT NO SNAGS ARE EXPECTED THERE EITHER. (END OPT) ONCE THOSE REQUIREMENTS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED, THE SPANISH PARLIAMENT WILL RATIFY THE STATUTE, AND CATALONIA WILL OFFICIALLY RECOVER THE REGIONAL STATUS WHICH WAS TAKEN AWAY FOUR DECADES AGO. HOW LONG WILL ALL THIS TAKE? THAT'S A HARD QUESTION TO ANSWER. FOR ONE THING, THE SPANISH PARLIAMENT IS EXPECTED TO TAKE A LONG NEW YEAR RECESS. FOR ANOTHER, THERE JUST MIGHT BE GENERAL ELECTIONS EARLY IN NINETEEN SEVENTY-NINE.

ACTUALLY, THE CATALONIAN AUTONOMY STATUTE IS NOT HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL. IT WAS APPROVED ALMOST UNANIMOUSLY BY THE CATALONIAN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT DURING THEIR PRE-CHRISTMAS DISCUSSIONS IN BARCELONA. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISSIDENT VOICE

WAS THAT OF FATHER LUIS MARIA XIRINACHS (PRON. GIRINAHCKS). A ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIEST AND A FIERCE CATALONIAN NATIONALIST WHO WAS JAILED, FINED AND PERSECUTED UNDER THE LATE GENERAL FRANCO. HE WOULD LIKE THIS REGION TO BE EVEN MORE INDEPENDENT.

SOME REGIONS LIKE CATALONIA EVEN HAVE THEIR OWN DISTINCT LANGUAGES. HERE, IT'S CATALAN, AS CLOSE TO FRENCH AS IT IS TO THE CASTILLIAN SPANISH THEY SPEAK IN MADRID. REGIONAL LANGUAGES AND HISTORIES WERE OFTEN SUPPRESSED IN THE GENERALISSIMO'S DAY. WITH THEIR NEW HOMERULE STATUTE, CATALONIAN PARTIOTS WILL RECLAIM THEIR LINGUISTIC, CULTURAL, AND HISTORIC HERITAGE WITHOUT RENOUNCING THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE NEW SPANISH DEMOCRACY.

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